



Wednesday, October 29, 2003

389th Engineers pave the way for progress

Photos by Capt. Mark Munford, 389th Engr. Bn.
Story by Spc. Anthony Reinoso, 372nd MPAD

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – The U.S. Army is working on improving the quality of life for the troops while Operation Iraqi Freedom progresses in Iraq. One of the larger projects presently underway is the revamping of the Camp Victory base. The soldiers of C Company, 389th Engineer Battalion (Heavy), an Army Reserve unit from Dubuque, Iowa, are working to clear the thick wild fields surrounding Camp Victory, Iraq.

According to Capt. Mark Munford, commander of C Company, 389th Engineer Battalion, the first thing that has to be done is to proof the land. Proofing means to clear and level the ground scheduled for construction. Most of the land on Camp Victory is covered with wheat fields that need to be burned and trees that need to be torn down, Munford said. The soldiers of C Company also have to clear the area of any possible land mines or improvised explosive devices on at least 60 acres.

"We cleared the whole west side of BIAP (Baghdad International Airport)," said Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Henson of the 389th Engineer Battalion. "Now we are doing the same thing here. This is probably a bigger area."

Next the soldiers level the ground and lay down gravel for vehicle traction and to decrease dust levels from the fine-grain, dusty, Iraqi sand. Munford said this is also necessary because the water tends to sit over the sand rather than soak into the ground.

"After the ground has been leveled, the job of construction will go to KBR (Kellogg, Brown and Root)," Munford said. KBR, a U.S. construction and logistics company, will truck in modular buildings and install electrical wiring and plumbing.

According to Maj. Jack Otteson, chief base camp coordination authority of the 1st Armored Division Engineer Brigade, the buildings will be fully operational living, dining and administrative facilities.

"This will give troops a first-class living facility," Otteson said. The buildings will include running water for showers and toiletries, climate-controlled facilities equipped with communication servers for Internet and telephone access, television monitors, and satellite connection.



Soldiers of C Company, 389th Engineer Battalion (Heavy), an Army Reserve unit from Dubuque, Iowa, burn wheat field areas near Baghdad, Iraq, recently to clear land for construction.



A soldier of C Company, 389th Engineer Battalion (Heavy), an Army Reserve unit from Dubuque, Iowa, grades a road, clearing it of rubble and trash recently at the Baghdad International Airport in Iraq.

The Old Ironsides Report October 29, 2003

NEWS

Deadly walls of flame -- 'It's almost like a war' Made to burn: Nature gets its way in California

Even though some steps may be taken to mitigate the effects, the great wildfires now laying waste to Southern California are as unavoidable as earthquakes, ecologists say - the price nature extracts from those who would make this state their home. "California's ecology is a fire ecology," said Karen Terrill, a spokeswoman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. "This landscape evolved with fire, and that's not going to change. This is another example of Mother Nature letting us know she's more powerful than we are." Fire experts cited four reasons for the disaster:

-- Drought: Southern California is in its fourth year of drought, and dead brush and trees are crackling dry.

-- The Santa Anas: These hot, dry seasonal winds are exceptionally strong this year, serving as a bellows driving the fires.

-- Interface: The term wildfire experts use to describe development in wildland areas. The more interface, the more property loss from wildfires.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the more time firefighters spend saving structures, the less time they have to stop wildfires by digging fire breaks and setting backfires.

-- Heavy fuel loads: California's forests and brushlands are overstocked with small trees, bug-killed big timber and chaparral. Additionally, many native brush species are highly resinous, uniquely suited for explosive combustion. Of these factors, only interface and fuel loads are susceptible to human management. But the task of regulating development in wildland areas and devising comprehensive fuel reduction policies has proved daunting, riven by squabbling from a variety of interest groups.

Firefighters protect Los Angeles but pull back in San Diego County

Tens of thousands of people fled the San Bernadino mountains Tuesday to escape raging wildfires, causing a traffic jam on a narrow mountain highway, and frustrated firefighters said there was little they could do to stop the flames. About 80,000 full-time residents have been evacuated from the mountains since Saturday, and the situation got worse Tuesday. "Just about everything is burning," said William Bagnell, fire chief of the Crest Forest Fire Protection District. Authorities announced two more deaths in San Bernadino County on Tuesday, bringing the death toll to 17 in California's deadliest wildfires in more than a decade. Ten thousand firefighters were on the front lines throughout the state, and Gov. Gray Davis estimated the cost at nearly \$2 billion. "This is a total disaster," Davis said. "It reminds me of when I was in Vietnam, communities were burned out." Since Oct. 21, at least 10 wind-driven wildfires -- many of them arson-caused -- have rampaged through Southern California, demolishing neighborhoods, gutting businesses and blackening more than half a million acres of land from the Mexican border to the Ventura-Los Angeles county line. Nearly 1,600 homes have been destroyed.

Oddly Enough

Podiatrist charged with billing legless people

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - A federal grand jury has indicted a Los Angeles podiatrist on fraud charges for billing Medicare for procedures on patients that turned out to have no feet or to have been dead. Prosecutors said on Friday that Robert Ken Kasamatsu, 41, used the names and numbers of about 100 Medicare beneficiaries, some of whom he had never seen, to create and submit bogus claims totaling more than \$600,000 between 1996 and 2000. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeannie Joseph said Kasamatsu obtained Medicare information for the fraudulent bills from the nursing homes where he sometimes saw patients. He submitted bills for "two-foot" services on about 40 Medicare recipients who had had one or both feet amputated, and for 30 people who had died, Joseph said. She added that in some cases, Kasamatsu treated one foot while claiming to have treated both feet. "A lot of people called into Medicare when they got their statements and noticed that there were these charges from this doctor and they had never seen him," Joseph said. "They got a number of complaints and that's what started the ball rolling." He was indicted by a grand jury in Santa Ana, California, on Wednesday on two health care fraud charges. If convicted, he faces up to 20 years in federal prison.

SPORTS

Shaq-Kobe feud leads to Lakers team meeting

Just a few hours before the start of the regular season Tuesday, all was not well in Lakerland. Coach Phil Jackson fined Kobe Bryant an undisclosed amount for his highly critical comments of teammate Shaquille O'Neal, and the team met for 20 minutes to discuss a rift between two superstars that has escalated into a full-blown feud. "There were no signs or indications that it would snowball the way it has in a matter of 36 hours, so we'll see what happens from here," teammate Derek Fisher said. Bryant was listed as doubtful for the opener against the Dallas Mavericks after he said he didn't think his surgically repaired knee was strong enough to withstand the rigors of a 48-minute game. The Lakers expected him to play until hearing otherwise Monday on ESPN. The other thing hurting Bryant was his feelings, and it appears there's no easy way for the Lakers to soothe them.

This Day in History **29 October**

539 -BC- Babylon falls to Cyrus the Great of Persia

1682 William Penn lands in what will become Pennsylvania

1811 1st Ohio River steamboat leaves Pittsburgh for New Orleans

1863 Intl Committee of the Red Cross founded (Nobel 1917, 1944, 1963)

1894 First election of the Hawaiian Republic

1904 First intercity trucking service (Colorado City & Snyder, Texas)

1923 "Runnin' Wild" (introducing the Charleston) opens on Broadway

1923 Turkey proclaimed a republic (National Day)

1942 16,000 Jews killed in Pinsk Russia

1942 Alaska Highway completed

1945 First ball point pen goes on sale, 57 years after it was patented

1956 Chet Huntley & David Brinkley, NBC News, team up

1956 Israeli Defense Force crosses Egyptian territory in the Sinai

